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Truckee resident Jason Matthews' novel is in 500 book stores across America

By Christine Stanley
 Sierra Sun
 December 22, 2005

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Jason Matthews' universe took 10 years to create. His planets — Alpha, Delta, Theta and Omega — materialized in an instant, but their inhabitants — the master-race marsupials, the giant pigs and the gnomes — took much longer to evolve.

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Matthews is proud of his creation. And others who have witnessed its uniqueness maintain that its existence is thought-provoking and imaginative.

"The Big Bang" hit shelves in October, and has already made it from the hands of its Truckee author to more than 500 book sellers across America. And here in town it is quite the philosophic conversation starter.

"I really want people to recognize that we are all part of the whole, and to ask themselves why their life events and experiences happened," Matthews said. "I hope that in some way my book helps the world open more to spirituality and to seeking enlightenment."

Matthews delves into the big-picture unanswerable questions of intelligent design, freewill, spiritual development and reincarnation in The Big Bang, his first novel, in which an inventor and a carpenter create a miniature self-contained universe. The astonishing events and remarkable societies that evolve cause the characters to question and re-consider all that they have ever believed about evolution, humanity, and spirituality.

"I think that we all question the meaning of life and why we are here," said Matthews. "I don't think it's hard to imagine that the answers may be more simple than they appear."

Catch Matthews in a coffee shop and he'll talk at length about those personal beliefs, and the views that sculpted his book's plot and characters. His speech is eloquent and well described; his writing is quick, concise, and entertaining, the type that appeals to the thoughtful masses.

"Jason is engaged and in touch with humanity," said Bookshelf at Hooligan Rocks manager Lydia Sparksworthy. "He's not too smart, or too funny, or too sarcastic, and that shows in his book. I enjoyed how nice of a mix it was.

"It's all over the place in that it's spiritual; it's scientific; it has nice characters. There is a lot going on."

At 38, Matthews is just now wrapping his fingers and mind around a purpose and goal he has long sought. A graduate of the University of Carolina at Chapel Hill, Matthews received his degree in radio, television, and film, but gave up on writing screenplays after a single year in Hollywood.

"I just couldn't stand the scene," he said.

So he moved to Truckee, where he "became a ski bum" and spent the last 15 years painting houses, still dabbling with writing and the idea of producing his ideas.

"I was having a lot of fun, but I was feeling like I was abandoning my story," Matthews said. "I was not fulfilled, but I didn't know how to get a screenplay made to a movie."

In 1991 Matthews kicked himself into gear and decided to turn his already-written screenplay "The Universe Generator" into an easier-to-sell novel.

"There was a lot of down time because I had to make a living as a house painter. Then there would be very productive days or months where I would get a lot done," he said. "But even if you can only get out one page a day, after a year, you've got something that feels substantial."

And what feels substantial now is the amount of positive praise and feedback that Matthews is receiving from his readers.

"I've had a lot of people tell me that they just blasted right through it," he said. "When I hear the reviews I just jump up and down and my heart just pitter-patters."

So far, neither Matthews or the staff at Bookshelf at Hooligan Rocks, the local store carrying his novel, have received

Truckee resident Jason Matthews stands with his book, "The Big Bang," at the Bookshelf at Hooligan Rocks. Photo by Ryan Salm/Sierra Sun

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any negative feedback on the book.

"I think that the book asks a lot of questions and offers a different outlook on life," said Matthews' writing assistant Sarah Poynter, who acted as Matthews' sounding board for new ideas and clarification for more than two years. "And I think that's the reason it's fun because it is imaginative."

Matthews is already working on a sequel to The Big Bang and said he hopes to soon retire as a house painter and begin a new chapter of life as a full-time writer.

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